

**Board of County Commissioners
Leon County, Florida**

Attachment # 2
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Date: September 17, 2003
To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Parvez Alam, County Administrator
Subject: Follow-up to District 2 Community Meeting of September 2, 2003

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation was provided by George Farr, Music Minister of Lake Talquin Baptist Church , followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Jane Sauls.

- Chairman Grippa requested a motion designating Commissioner Sauls as the Chairman for her District meeting.
- Commissioner Thael moved, seconded by Commissioner Winchester, to appoint Commissioner Sauls as Chairperson for tonight's meeting. The motion carried 6-0, with Commissioner Proctor absent.

Presentation

- Presentation by Kiley-Horn and Associates, Inc. - Representing Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on the Big Bend Scenic Byway in Leon County
 - Handouts with information regarding the Big Bend Scenic Byway in Leon County were provided
 - Eric Hines of Kiley-Horn gave a brief introduction of the Big Bend Scenic Byway
 - a proposed 248-mile roadway that runs through Leon, Franklin, Wakulla and Liberty Counties
 - a grass-roots effort by members of the community, starting with a corridor advocacy group
 - Mr. C. B. Subrahmanyam, Vice-chair of the Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) for the Leon County portion of the Big Bend Scenic Byway, informed the residents that a large portion of the Byway includes District 2 people want to preserve Highway 20 and the character of the neighborhood.
 - Stated that this project will provide the recognition for the area and its valuable and recreational resources located in West and Southwest Leon County
 - The CAG will be able to participate in writing the proposal together with the consultants in order to get the Big Bend Scenic Byway in Leon County project approved.
 - Encouraged citizens to become involved by joining the CAG, who will be holding a meeting on Monday, September 15th at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall.

Status Reports

1. Update on the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)

- Assistant County Administrator, Vince Long, explained what a CRA is, how a new CRA is created, and presented the County's objection/argument to the City of Tallahassee's proposed Downtown CRA. Issues addressed in the presentation include:
 - Defined a CRA - a geographically defined area (designated as such under the Community Redevelopment Act), exhibiting pervasive slum and blighted areas. A CRA is established for the purposes of utilizing statutorily permitted economic development tools within the CRA.
 - Illustrated through slides, that the Downtown Tallahassee area does not exhibit pervasive slum and blighted areas but rather consists of highly valued property (law firms, lobbyists' offices, restaurants) and will continue to be a prosperous area
 - Charter counties, as Leon, must approve CRAs, as the County did with the Frenchtown CRA. The Board voted 7-0 against the proposed Downtown Tallahassee CRA.
 - Loophole allows City to **expand** a CRA (expanding the Frenchtown CRA), without County approval.
 - The County will lose \$80 million over the 20-year period in property tax revenue. The County will have to raise the County millage rate and/or reduce the level of County services - library services, parks and recreation, law enforcement, emergency medical services, etc.
 - The Board announced that there will be a Joint City/County CRA meeting on Monday, September 15th at 3:00 p.m. in City Commission Chambers. The Board urged citizens to contact the City Commission and ask for an immediate halt to the approval of a Downtown CRA.
- There were no speakers on this item.

2. Update on Emergency Medical Services

- Assistant County Administrator, Vince Long, gave a summary of the County's decision to implement a County-run EMS department, that will be activated on January 1, 2004. Mr. Long focused on the positives of the County-run that includes:
 - a continued commitment to provide the highest level of service
 - increased emphasis on training of EMS professionals
 - expanded Advanced Life Support training for first responders to the scene in rural areas (i. e. EMS personnel, City of Tallahassee firefighters) to optimize ability to provide life-saving medical treatment
 - increased emphasis on outreach to the community (training citizens to be "first responders")
 - a commitment to transfer/hire TMH's employees who have knowledge and experience regarding EMS

- secured a contract with Air Methods Corporation to provide air ambulance emergency medical and transport services at no cost to the community; Air Methods "LifeNet" service will be stationed at Tallahassee airport.
- source of funding is a Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) of 0.5 mil for the first year of service, and a proposed reduction to 0.2 mil in future years.
- Speakers:
 - Will Blanton asked how dispatch would be handled and by whom: Responses - Leon County Sheriff's Office will be handling dispatch.
 - Commissioner Grippa responded that he hoped there would be a joint City/County dispatch center to handle all emergency calls.
 - Louis Maige, a City of Tallahassee firefighter, voiced concerns that property taxes would be used to pay for EMS and suggested that a tax on car insurance or car tag be imposed to pay for EMS.
 - Mr. Long responded that the County has a restrictive revenue source appropriated for EMS.
- Commissioner Rackleff stated that the current fiscal budget's MSTU for EMS will pay for the capital costs involved in the first year but the County proposes to eliminate the MSTU as soon as possible
- Commissioner Maloy wanted to know what percentage of EMS costs will be paid by the "user"
 - Mr. Long stated that the County hopes to collect 45% from users, though TMH is now collecting only 33%.
- Commissioner Thaeli suggested a plan to redirect \$1.75 million from District 3 and District 5 Branch Libraries to pay for EMS capital costs and eliminate the EMS MSTU.
- Commissioner Winchester responded to Commissioner Thaeli's plan by stating that he is an advocate for libraries, especially branch libraries, and the County has a 3-year plan for funding EMS.
- Speaker: Kenny Harvey asked where the ALS will be stationed. Response was that Tallahassee Fire Department or EMS quick response would provide ALS.

3. Overview of the Fiscal Year 03/04 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget

- Alan Rosenzweig, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), gave an overview of the FY 03/04 budget - the first budget prepared since Leon County became a Home Rule Charter County. There were handouts available to the public that provided an overview of property tax rates, tax savings and % of total budget assigned to each category of spending. For example, Public Safety, the largest category of spending, receives 32% of total budget. Highlights of the FY 03/04 Budget include:

- The Fire Services MSTU and Water/Sewer Franchise Fee will be eliminated and replaced with the more equitable Public Services Tax (PST), which is charged to all users of public utilities.
- The Communications Service Tax (CST) will provide \$1 million/per year in revenue that will be used for the purchase of flooded property and flood mitigation.
- The second year of the Senior Homestead Exemption provides \$414,000 in savings for seniors claiming the exemption (approx. 1,942).
- Increased funding for library services.
- In efforts to reduce jail population, a Mental Health Coordinator position is added.
- Increased funding to support Mosquito Control's spraying.
- Funding to eliminate fee for County residents who participate in City recreation/sports programs
- Among like counties, Leon County ranks second highest in amount of exempt property, the lowest in operating budget, and second lowest in number of County employees per capita.
- Helen Moeller, Director of Library Services, reported that, due to the amount of rain, the completion of the Ft. Braden Branch Library will be delayed. It is expected to open in mid-December.
- There were no speakers on this item.

Citizens To Be Heard

- Craig Fletcher -
 - Appreciated Mosquito Control coming out to spray (Commissioner Sauls reminded residents that they need to call Mosquito Control to come out to specific locations)
 - Suggested that County not purchase any land that will be taken off the tax rolls
 - Stated that only 2 roads have been built in the community and recommended that new roads are needed; suggested Leon County do like Lakeland, FL - build an expressway to airport and make it a toll road
- Will Blanton - expressed concern regarding the lack of "safe areas" for children; requested County look into building more bicycle paths for children to ride safely; suggested the County could contract with the State to build on State property.
- Sam Bruce - expressed his dissatisfaction with the Ft. Braden Landfill Roll-off site and the lack of common sense regarding dropping off waste materials.
 - Commissioner Sauls stated that she had many complaints about the Ft. Braden roll-off site and asked to staff to review procedures on the size of trailers and total amount of waste permitted to dump at the roll-off sites.
 - Commissioner Winchester asked if waste can be deposited at transfer Station.
 - Solid Waste Director, Jud Curtis stated that the Citizen Advisory Committee recommended that the public not be allowed to use Transfer Station until Capital Circle is 4-laned.
 - Commissioner Thael stated that every County taxpayer pays \$40/yr for roll-off sites and reminded citizens that illegal dumping is a crime

- Frank Brace well - asked about Lottery dollars for education and where do they go; suggested that after 180 days, the money not collected should be distributed to education, rather than back in prizes, advertising

Discussion Items by Commissioners

- **Commissioners Proctor, Thaell, Grippa, Rackleff, Maloy and Winchester**
 - Expressed their appreciation to the residents who attended the meeting and stated that they support the projects for District 2.
- **Commissioner Rackleff**
 - Provided a summary on the water quality issues facing Leon County: concern regarding the water quality at Lake Talquin; pollution from Georgia being deposited into Ochlockonee River; the Grady County Tyre Creek Dam project. He stated that the Board is looking into their legal options and following these issues very closely.
- **Commissioner Sauls**
 - Announced that at the September 16, 2003 Board meeting, there will be an agenda item providing a full report on the water pollution coming from Georgia.
 - Thanked the residents for attending.
- **Commissioner Grippa**
 - Reminded and encouraged citizens to contact City Commissioners regarding opposition to the CRA.
 - Reminded Seniors to start filling out forms for the Senior Homestead Exemption.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.